

National Planning Framework Submission

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Introduction

This submission has been prepared with the fact that the NPF will affect all future development in Ireland for the next 2 decades in mind. Whilst the subjects covered in this submission might not necessarily be directly addressed under the National Planning Framework the reality is that the NPF will ultimately determine the development of these areas indirectly over the coming years.

When we address these particular subjects, we address them in a general sense in order to give scope for further idea generation. The subjects are addressed in such a way as to offer a guide to national development and we respectfully suggest that they form the basis of the guidelines which should be followed in order to ensure fair and balanced national development.

This plan has been developed on foot of various public consultations hosted around the west and north-west at which we gathered feedback from attendees.

This submission focuses largely on the BMW region, as we feel this is the region which requires the most planning, investment and development over the next 20 years. In the instance where infrastructure is developed successfully

Urban Centres in Rural Regions

The government strategy of identifying urban centres with the resources needed to grow an industry has worked. No-one is doubting that this strategy has been successful in areas such as Athlone/Monksland and Limerick but to name two.

We understand that for the North-West region going forward, Sligo has been identified as an growth hub and this is very welcomed. Sligo have a lot to offer prospective businesses and investors and with some relatively minor infrastructural improvements could be a fantastic growth centre and success story for regional development in the future.

However, we feel more needs to be done with regard to smaller regional towns. Whilst it is true and understood that large scale FDI can only be delivered to certain location based on the resources available, smaller scale FDI and more importantly Domestic Enterprises, can and should be encouraged to start and grow in smaller regional towns.

Smaller regional towns such as Boyle, Ballyhaunis, Ballinasloe, Loughrea etc. have some serious advantages over larger urban centres when it comes to attracting investment and job creation. Generally speaking land and property is cheaper, for the most part connectivity with larger centres is adequate and labour costs can generally be lower as the cost of living is not as high as in cities and the quality of life is generally better.

These are some of the reasons why we believe that the NPF should work toward identifying smaller regional towns which should be earmarked for investment in job creation both through smaller scale FDI and encouraging the growth of domestic enterprises.

As part of the designation of UCRR's and the development of a strategy to grow such centres, we would submit that balanced development of the centres should also be prioritised, in that, to ensure the existing internal infrastructure of UCRR's is not overloaded on in any one area. An example would be whereby Sligo is very heavily developed on the southern side of the town, the result being that the crossing bridge creates a bottleneck at times, and also there is significant demand on the infrastructure in this part of the time versus that of the north side of the town.

Infrastructure - Road, Rail & Airport & Seaport

Connectivity is king when it comes to growing jobs in rural regions. One manufacturer in the West of Ireland famously quotes that 20% of their produce is damaged by the time it reaches Dublin, directly as a result of poor road conditions. Without developing our roads network to a standard which is equivalent to that of our European counterparts we will struggle to simply retain the jobs which already exist in the West of Ireland, never mind generate new jobs.

The number one priority should be to put forward the BMW and North Western Region

Dual carriageways and/or motorways, which ever are the most cost effective, must be developed in such a way as to dissect the west and north west of the country with a solid backbone roads infrastructure. Should these roads need to be done under a PPP and tolled once operational, then so be it. It would be vital howe that PPP's in the future done in such a way as to ensure a good deal for the taxpayer. The long term vision must be applied and the In addition, local and regional roads will need to upgraded and maintained such as to improve connectivity between smaller regional towns and larger urban centres.

We would propose that the following major road connectivity projects should be accommodated as part of the National Planning Framework:

Derry - Letterkenny - Sligo - Knock Airport - Tuam

Cork - Mallow

Monaghan - Cavan - Dublin

Mullingar - Longford, Longford - Sligo, Longford - Westport

The Galway ring road / by pass too must be prioritised. Galway as an economic hub will not survive unless this can be accommodated. Long commutes combined with a rising cost of living will make it more and more difficult for companies to recruit appropriate staff which is the number one concern of existing companies in the city.

In addition to road connectivity development, the potential of rail must be explored as a means of growing the manufacturing and export potential of our nation. Connectivity of rail between Derry, Letterkenny, Sligo, Galway, via Knock Airport onto the south and between Limerick and Wexford, would be a brilliant development for the delivery of freight.

Ballina is the biggest freight mover in the country, currently there are significant hold ups on the Westport to Dublin line as freight trains must wait on passenger trains to pass at certain stations. Most this freight is then going on from Dublin to Wexford for export. We would suggest that the rail connection between Knock Airport and Limerick and Limerick and Wexford be developed such as to accommodate freight being shipped from Ballina and the West of Ireland in general.

The development of deep sea ports in Galway and Killybegs too should be explored as commercial sea activity can lead to much wanted and needed economic stimulus. These deep sea ports should be established as core nodes for the purposes of drawing TEN-T funding. So too should Knock Airport. Ireland West Airport Knock is an invaluable resource and is one that should be developed even further in order to grow economic activity in the West of Ireland. Greater investment in the development of Airports and Deep Seaports should be carried out with a vision for Ireland in 2040 in mind.

TEN-T funding should be sought to develop the priority actions for infrastructure development in this submission. This European funding of up to 40% should be leveraged to ensure that as many infrastructural projects are undertaken in as short a period of time as is possible. By investing in infrastructure, we can ensure that urban centres in rural regions can grow and make an important contribution to the economic and social fabric of our nation.

Road, Rail and Port Infrastructure Proposals

The cornerstone of developing a working rural Ireland with commercial activity that thrives and grows is to ensure our road and rail infrastructure enables people in all parts of the country to have ease of access to other parts of Ireland as directly and as quickly as is possible. In order for this to be a reality, our motorway and rail network must dissect the entire nation, north to south, east to west and everywhere in between.

The economic benefit of a superior infrastructure network, particularly for rural areas, is immeasurable. However, inferior infrastructure is evidently calamitous. The question of funding is always one that comes to the fore when large scale infrastructure projects are mooted. The TEN-T funding for core infrastructure projects available from the EU will cover 40% of the capital costs of our proposed plans.

The additional funding that will be required can be raised against future earnings of tolls on the roads. Albeit that toll roads are unpopular in principal, the road network that currently exists will not be tolled and will remain available for anyone who wishes to use them. In addition to them, we will have a modern motorway network which is fit for purpose and which will facilitate the economic revival of rural Ireland.

Rail freight is a very effective option for transporting goods across Ireland, and with good planning, further afield via boat. The speed and ease with which rail freight can be moved means that if developed in a connective manner, it could be used commercially alongside road-freight, on a greater scale.

As is the case with TEN-T in relation to road infrastructure, 40% of the capital costs of core rail infrastructure projects can be drawn down through the TEN-T funding

mechanism from the EU. The remaining costs can be recouped over time through a levy on all freight transported through the newly developed and connected rail network.

Road Infrastructure

The development of a motorway from Dublin to Westport via Knock & Castlebar and Derry to Westport via Sligo should be a primary infrastructural goal. If the rural regions are to have a hope of thriving into the future the physical connectivity of the regions with our nation's capital is one of the most vital elements. The Cork to Mallow road too must be prioritised for upgrade.

Representative groups of businesses and employers in rural regions have outlined how essential a modern roads infrastructure is when it comes to attracting further investment. Many large industrial employers based outside of Dublin would be answerable to corporate masters in Dublin or from abroad. They would also be competing within their own companies for internal projects and internal investment to expand and sustain their operations in the rural regions, a task made all the more difficult if the regional infrastructure is not up to the required standard.

The development of the road links between Letterkenny to Derry to Aghnacloy / Monaghan, and further from Monaghan to Ardi linking in with the M1 should be examined in full and developed. There is a serious need too to develop the road between Kells and Cavan Town.

Secondary and regional roads too require specific pillars of funding to ensure connectivity between smaller rural towns and villages and larger towns in rural regions. i.e. Claremorris to Ballina, Creggs to Tuam, Tulsk to Roscommon etc. Ensuring interconnectivity between larger and smaller towns is easy means that the spin-off boost can be more easily noticed in smaller towns.

Rail Infrastructure

If Ireland West Airport (Knock) is to continue to grow it will need to be connected not only by a modern road network but also by rail. Under the TEN-T program, we propose the development of a railway from Derry to Cork via Ireland West Airport (Knock) & Athenry.

The opportunities for industrial development in the west of Ireland, part of the country long since forgotten by successive governments, under these proposals will be greater than they have ever been.

The rural regions have been hamstrung for decades due to a lack of infrastructure, there needs to be a vision for a stronger more industrious rural Ireland. While retaining the natural beauty of our unspoiled landscape and environment. The ability to move heavy freight from Ireland West Airport (Knock) and the western region in general to any other part of Ireland with ease will play a role in making this a reality.

Park & Ride facilities should be further developed where possible to reduce the pressure on the road infrastructure entering busy cities at peak commuter times. There must be proper planning in this regard and every effort must be taken to ensure park and ride facilities are located in the most appropriate places to maximise their usage.

Port Infrastructure

The development of deep sea ports in Galway and Killybegs too should be explored as commercial sea activity can lead to much wanted and needed economic stimulus. These deep sea ports should be established as core nodes for the purposes of drawing TEN-T funding. Greater investment in the development of Deep Seaports should be carried out with a vision for Ireland in 2040 in mind.

The development of a deep sea port in Galway City will play a pivotal role in the development of the rural regions commercial viability. A full strategy needs to be developed to ensure this development is linked with other infrastructural development plans to maximise the the potential of a deep sea port in the west of Ireland. Connectivity to the rail network is vital to the success of any port development, and ensuring all development plans are future proofed and output maximised is vital to the long term economic success of rural regions.

The Port of Galway company have devised a report, this report describes stages of the development and the proposed works to be undertaken at each stage as part of the proposed planning application, and the requirements they meet.

The Planning application for the proposed New Port of Galway consists of 23.89 Hectares of land reclamation. The development will extend 935m out to sea providing 660m of quay berth to –12m Chart Datum (C.D.) depth serviced by a –8m C.D. channel depth. The development itself will consist of berthing facilities for general cargo vessels, oil tankers, passenger vessels, fishing vessels and container vessels.

A western marina is proposed to be formed providing 216 amenity berths. The development will also contain Roll on/Roll off facilities and berths for naval / research vessels. Breakwaters will be constructed as part of the proposed development to provide requisite shelter and craft stability while berthed.

The land reclamation will include for the provision of harbour related sites for the following:

- Harbour Management Warehousing
- Coal Yard
- Waste Export
- Steel Import Yard
- Scrap Metal Yard
- Ship Chandlers
- Roll on/Roll off Yard

- Container Yard
- Project Cargos – Ocean Energy Development & Servicing
- Biomass Storage and Handling
- Marina Promenade
- Parklands
- Renmore Promenade

This is a major infrastructural project and one that I would support in its entirety. Through Public Private Partnership, projects of this scale can be achieved relatively quickly. There is no guarantee that a project of this scale can be delivered in the lifetime of one government.

But if their agenda is set for Rural Ireland to enjoy the economic recovery of its urban counterparts, then I firmly believe this project and others similar can be completed to safeguard the long term economic future of rural regions.

Killybegs has huge potential for the development of a deep sea port, this would significantly improve the viability of Donegal as a commercial concern.

Education

Consideration must be given to the provision of third level education in the future. The numbers seeking third level places will have increased by 50% by 2027. Already we see the disastrous effects of there not being sufficient accommodation for third level students in our major cities. This problem will only increase.

A holistic approach must be taken to plan for the education needs of the next generations. This must include diversifying the scope of courses and types of placements which will be available, developing a practical plan to deal with the accommodation demands of third level institutes, and expanding the existing facilities into more rural locations.

Satellite towns of major third level towns should be developed to accommodate campus facilities such as to relieve the pressure for infrastructure and accommodation in the third level towns. This too could make future building more affordable. In an interconnected world consideration must be given to the idea of decentralising the

delivery of educational services, and perhaps even remote educating should be explored in more detail.

Health

An example of poor forward planning in Health is the current location of the planned National Children's Hospital at James' hospital.

Accessibility to services is a huge issue in our major hospitals in cities around the country. There must be serious feasibility studies carried out to appraise the possibility of relocating existing services which are most difficult to access due to infrastructural deficiencies.

Further, the spacing of Emergency Departments and Stabilization Units should be reviewed and appropriate measures taken to ensure that not only ambulance response times can be achieved in accordance with national guidelines but also that the time taken from ambulance pick-up to an ED or Stabilization Unit can be optimized.

Jobs & Enterprise

All planning and development should be carried out with the prospect of creating sustainable jobs in regions which desperately require them. We would submit that it would be through designating Urban Centres in Rural Regions for smaller scale FDI and specific investment pillars for domestic job creation that this would be the first step toward delivering fairer and more balanced regional economic growth.

A number of hubs already exist which receive inward investment and as a result are growing solidly. The objective of designating UCRR's would be to ensure that the state agencies charged with the facilitation of job creation would have a statutory mechanism through which to communicate with local authorities, local communities, businesses and individuals to stay abreast of all available resources in a particular UCRR. LEO's could play a role in establishing the designation of UCRR's but also in developing and maintaining a larger database/registry of resources available in their catchment area..

The designation of UCRR's should be done such as to give appropriate stimulus to rural regions. A methodology should be developed and implemented such as to ensure adequate planning is done to deliver resources and infrastructure to ensure UCRR's can deliver jobs growth to rural regions.

Local authorities should certainly play a larger role in the development of jobs in rural regions. A nationwide review of Local Enterprise Office performance should be undertaken with a view to scaling up their involvement in the job creation process. The principles of impartiality should be impressed upon LEO's, as whilst there are massive benefits to the bottom up structure of LEO's their should be checks and balances in place to ensure local issues don't hamper enterprise development.

Additional resources should be introduced to ensure LEO's play a greater role in job creation. LEO's should play a greater role in analysing the commercial viability and needs of their catchment areas. They should play a statutory role in maintaining a registry of resources available to businesses in their catchment area.

Small and medium sized businesses generally start out as one and two person operations and grow from there. Barriers to which people encounter when starting up are often the likes of finding inexpensive but practical work spaces. Therefore, we feel a nationwide program should be developed and implemented to establish Enterprise Hubs in towns and villages throughout the country. These Enterprise Hubs should be equipped with high speed broadband and offer shared secretarial services (where appropriate) either through funding from Enterprise Ireland or through the use of labour activation schemes.

These hubs could also act as a "one-stop-shop" of sorts to assist community organisations and start-up businesses to complete paperwork and act as a link between state agencies, local authorities and bodies such as LEADER companies.

Tourism

In addition to the existing tourism designation throughout the country such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East; we propose that under the National Planning Framework, provisions should be made to accommodate the designation of a number of further Tourism Hubs throughout the country.

Consideration should thereafter be given to ensuring appropriate planning and development is invested in in order to ensure such attractions can be cultivated.

We believe each region should have a unique tourist theme (offering) developed based on the resources in that region. Just as is being done with the Wild Atlantic Way,

Ancient East & Shannon Blueway. In addition to these themes, it is proposed that the fishing industry be developed in all parts of Ireland and marketed in a broad and cohesive way to attract foreign fishing enthusiasts to Ireland. There is also an “old Ireland” which has been preserved by neglect and it is time that government agencies charged with tourism development and marketing were directed to develop this as a tourism product, tourists should be invited to “Experience Real Ireland” through Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo, Longford, Westmeath and Galway county.

The development of the much talked about “Irish Camino” speculated to developed right from Dublin to Westport along our existing canal and roads network and taking into account the potential for the development of a midlands national wetland park.

All park and trail planning should be carried out with serious consideration given to the fact that individuals and families should be incentivised to remain in their localities where possible. The planning process should be streamlined in these regions to ensure planning permission can be sought and granted with relative ease. There should be no undue restrictions on one off domestic housing developments in these regions.

Sea Angling Hub | Atlantic Coast

There are great stretches of the west and north west coast which lend themselves beautifully to sea angling. A vibrant tourism channel could be developed around this past-time with the right investment and a good strategy development.

Onshore and offshore sea angling could see Donegal in particular develop a niche tourism attraction. Special designation and supports should be given to the region in order to develop this as an industry.

Angling Tourism Hub | Shannonside Region & Lakelands

Angling tourism was once worth tens of millions every year to the shannonside region's economy, our economic recovery will be reliant on a resurgence in tourism and the

Mid-Shannon region absolutely should be designated as an angling tourism hub and promoted aggressively as such in the UK and across Europe.

There has been quite a bit of talk as of late regarding rural regeneration, and the economic fortunes (or misfortunes) of number of smaller towns and villages and and we submit that in response to calls from communities and business groups that the government under the NPF should initiate a new tourism initiative for the Shannonside Region.

Mid-Shannon region encompassing the Shannon basin from Athlone to Carrick-on-Shannon onto Lough Erne inclusive, should be designated as an Angling Tourism Hub and aggressively promoted as such by government agencies abroad.

Angling tourism on the Shannon and in adjacent water-courses was worth an estimated £98m in the late 90's to the local economy. It's not worth a fraction of that today but it could be if there were real efforts made by state agencies. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) would bear some of the responsibility for promoting angling in Ireland. A study carried out by IFI found that 406,000 people were involved in recreational angling in Ireland during 2012, with over 150,000 of these travelling from Northern Ireland and overseas. We believe that overseas number should and could be much larger. If the likes of IFI were doing their job right and the political will-power was there to achieve more.

This study also found that direct expenditure of recreational angling by out-of-state anglers was estimated at €121 million, and when indirect spend was accounted for this figure grew to approximately €280 million. An estimated 10,000 jobs are supported by recreational angling in the economy also nationwide. However, recreational anglers would welcome the following initiatives to improve angling in Ireland; More policing of fisheries, Increased protection of fish stocks, Conservation measures, Bank side management and an Increased practice of catch and release. This would lead me to believe that IFI have a body of work to do in order to ensure Irish Fisheries could adequately cater for increased angler numbers.

If the government are serious about rural regeneration then they should be directing IFI to develop the infrastructure and address concerns relating to poor fish stock management practices. Thereafter, the mid-Shannon and Lakelands region should be designated as an Angling Tourism Hub and promoted to anglers very aggressively both at home and abroad. Facilities and resources need to be put in place to ensure that visiting anglers have can comfortably access our waterways and fish in peace and tranquility.

Cross-agency co-operation is vital in order to ensure the success of such an initiative. Tourism Ireland in conjunction with IFI should deliver a clear message to the anglers of the world that Ireland is home to the finest most well managed fisheries on earth with renowned reputation for hospitality and culture.

We must utilise the natural resources all around us if we are going to grow this rural region. The Shannon basin and Lakelands can boast some of the best fishing holes in existence and it's time government did what is required and support communities by highlighting what we have to offer.

Salmon Fishing

The revival of the salmon fishing industry in west Galway, and across the country where needed should be prioritised. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that salmon stocks are restored and maintained and that facilities are developed to ensure anglers can easily access fishing holes.

Greenways & Bikeways across the North, South, East & West

Greenways and Bikeways should be delivered across the country but by working with landowners and communities. Common sense can go a long way to developing good relationships and delivering enhanced results at a lower cost. The bottom up approach should be adopted to deliver greenways and bikeways. The development of the Irish Camino could be incorporated as part of this measure.

Other Tourist Initiatives

During our public consultation process two additional incentives were suggested:

1. That active tourist kiosks be established at Dublin Airport to encourage visitors to venture outside of Dublin for more than a tour. This could be facilitated by government and funded by industry if required.
2. Small and medium sized hospitality operators should be encouraged and incentivised to attend international holiday trade fairs in order to secure international business.
3. The development of a rural tourist office network, perhaps co-located with existing businesses or public services. Services could be staff during the peak season by students or labour activation scheme participants.
4. More needs to be done to ensure there are better lines of communication between small scale operators in the hospitality industry, local authorities and agencies marketing Ireland abroad to ensure the full range of what is on offer is marketed abroad.

Agriculture

CAP Reform

CAP reform must be looked at in very simple terms. No farmer should be receiving support under pillar 1 & pillar 2 combined greater than €50,000 and no-one should receive a single Farm Payment unless they are actively farming. In order for young farmers across Ireland to see a future in farming we need to make smaller family farms viable.

As part of CAP reform, we should see to it that all farmers currently receiving in excess of €50,000 would be brought down to this amount and differentiated price supports should be introduced which frontload the first 20 hectares of the family farm. This would be one of the first steps toward making family farms viable once again and protecting the rural way of life for generations to come.

Farm Diversification & Alternative Farming Enterprises

Through various programs (including LEADER) we would see a far greater emphasis placed on the development of alternative on farm enterprises and the diversification of existing farm enterprises being carried out.

The supply of high-speed broadband to rural communities and to farms is essential for the future development and diversification of farm enterprises.

We need to provide free financial and business planning advice to farmers who are seeking to develop their enterprises and ensure there are natural incentives for young farming entrepreneurs who are preparing new business plans. In order to provide this service, we propose the development of knowledge hubs where farmers can collect information about new farming possibilities, supports available to them and speak with someone in confidence on how best for them to progress their plans.

It is important to recruit industry experts to staff these knowledge hubs and will explore options of how to integrate them into existing organisations such as Citizens Information, LEADER Partnerships or Teagasc. The option to provide a specialist pillar of funding will be explored but the more likely option will be that an existing grant making organisation will provide funding for feasible projects.

All avenues of diversification should be explored including ventures such as, but not limited to speciality meat raising, horticulture, bee keeping etc. It is only by looking at alternatives to the traditional farming sectors that we can encourage more people to enter agriculture, while at the same time safeguarding the traditional sectors and enabling them to grow.

The greater variety of agriculture based enterprises we have in rural Ireland the better for everyone in our rural communities.

Flood Relief & Drainage

The solution to Ireland's flooding crisis needs to be multi-faceted and will include; the development of new canals, construction of flood defences, the use flood plains, dredging of rivers where appropriate and necessary, and the overall lowering of water table.

The Shannon

A single state body needs to have full responsibility for management of the River Shannon.

Flood relief measures on the Shannon will include addressing the pinch points on the River Shannon between Meelick and Athlone.

A central component of tackling flooding on the Shannon is that Lough Allen is dropped by 1.5 metres and a gradual basis between October and March. The ESB are agreeable to this measure provided that the OPW are agreeable to it.

If necessary flood defences for the town of Athlone should be provided without dispute.

The Suck

Problem areas along the River Suck need to be examined and Solutions delivered. This examination should include the identifying of pinch points on the Suck including any man made obstacles. Tributaries to the Suck also need to be looked at and a holistic solution agreed upon.

Turloughs

Where necessary overflow systems should be put in place immediately so that Turloughs that reach peak points and pose a threat to people or property can have the excess waters drained away. This would consist of a piped alleviation system and would act as a release valve of sorts.

All Rivers

All rivers in rural Ireland need a management plan to be developed, part of which should include flood management plans. The plans should ensure that water flows are adequate and take a comprehensive approach to river management. The OPW should be charged with the management of this system in conjunction with local authorities. A participation platform needs to be developed in order to facilitate that agencies and local authorities liaise with locals and take their knowledge of water systems in their localities into account.

Communications

Part of the reason that 700,000 rural homes and businesses require government intervention in order to have access to high-speed broadband is due to the fact that the sustainable economic development of many of these rural areas has been neglected for decades, with a greater emphasis being placed on the economic development of larger urban centres. While this suits government and big businesses, to have the bulk of commerce being conducted in relatively central hubs, it is detrimental to communities the length and breadth of rural Ireland.

In an ideal world, it should be our aim, that by focusing on stimulating economic activity in rural communities that more people would stay in and move to these rural communities. This would mean greater demand for services such as broadband for both domestic and business users, and would result in the market delivering the supply for that demand. However, we don't live in an ideal world. While this market driven approach will form part of the basis of our broadband infrastructure submission, we are inevitably left debating which should come first.

The nature of modern business means that every business from a shop selling lotto tickets to a factory placing orders needs reliable broadband. Therefore, it is the essential role of government to deliver a national broadband service to those areas who require it where private enterprise cannot do so commercially. This needs to be done in such a way that considers not just which regions need it first, but which regions will benefit from high-speed broadband access the most, with the greatest knock on effect.

Any company successful in tendering for the rollout of the “physical build” of the NBP need to have strict conditions on delivering targets applied to their contracts, with punitive measures for missing targets and incentives for surpassing them. For too long projects of this nature have ran over-budget and over-time.

High-speed broadband is a basic necessity in the 21st century. Every single business and household now requires high-speed broadband in order to function in the modern world. The road we have chosen in this regard should be structured more toward openness and easy accessibility by smaller suppliers.

The state cannot facilitate and part fund the creation of a monopoly or oligopoly. Provisions must be made to ensure that smaller service providers can easily plug into the network the taxpayers are funding under the national broadband plan, access to the network must be affordable and simple. An example has been set in france whereby smaller suppliers can pay for access to plug into the network at very affordable rates.

Mobile phone coverage too is a serious hindrance to the development of rural regions. A proper investment strategy must be facilitated by government either in competition with or in conjunction with the existing mobile phone service providers. Rural mobile phone blackspots frustrate small and medium sized business and hamstring growth in major way. The national planning framework should address this issue.

Energy

Sustainable energy solutions are required and energy independence will become more and more important as the decades pass by. However, this should not result in developers being given free reign run roughshod over communities and individuals in the name of environmental protection.

Sustainable energy must too be economically viable. Poorly thought out subsidies for alternative energy projects has resulted in desperately poor planning. Quite often subsidies can incentivise the wrong thing. Ireland has, in an effort to become greener, subsidised wind energy disproportionately and the effects are being felt across the country.

The wind energy policy of past governments have been poorly thought out, badly implemented and gave little or no consideration to best planning practice. It has been a

typical example of the cart being put before the horse. Since the first wind project in Ireland back in 1992 to now, there are still no statutory set-back distances.

It is so respectfully submitted that a statutory set-back distance of 10 meters for every meter a wind turbine is high be put into legislation under the National Planning Framework. Local authorities should have the autonomy to increase setback distances should they so see fit.

Incentives should be gauged toward offshore and non-invasive onshore energy projects such as wave energy and solar energy. Provisions should be made in the planning process at a national and local level to accommodate greater incentives for non-invasive renewable energy sources rather than invasive sources such as wind energy.

Community Banking and The Post Office Network

A community/public banking system must be planned for and developed in order to ensure basic banking services will be delivered to rural regions.

The post office network and credit unions can deliver basic banking. The AIB/An Post tie up has worked well for cash lodgements and a similar model could be expanded.

The New Zealand and German model of public banking too can be looked at and a similar system developed if so appropriate. Planning to deliver basic banking solutions to rural regions is a real concern for the future. It is something we as a nation must plan for and deliver on.

The Department of Social Protection should encourage clients where possible to use the Post Office for the collection of social welfare payments.

The Role of Local Authorities

There should be a greater role for local authorities in respect of enterprise development and community enhancement. In this regard greater funding should be made available in order to make this happen.

Urban Development

There are a number of issues too which must be addressed to ensure urban development can lead rural development. Below are some bullet points on same:

- Cities must become high-rise, multinationals require same, and urban sprawl is leading to serious commuter issues and is driving up house/accommodation prices ridiculously high in central locations.
- Towns with a population of more than 10,000 people should be designated to have statutory mechanisms of liaison between local government and industry to ensure the correct investments are being made and developments implemented.
- No new retail units should be facilitated in towns with large retail vacancy levels.
- In larger towns 10,000 plus people, a vacant property rate should be introduced. Linking this to commercial rates and increasing annually should incentivise landlords to let out their properties and spurn a burst of rural regeneration. Exemptions would be available should
- Change of use should be incentivised in rural towns and villages as wells larger towns with high rates of vacancy in commercial properties. Local authorities should be facilitated through funding from central government in order to remove any planning charges in relation to the change of use of long term vacant commercial buildings, a particular focus to convert disused commercial buildings into dwelling houses should be prioritised.
- The extension of the Gas Network into areas such as Sligo, Roscommon And Leitrim must be prioritised. In particular the larger urban areas. The difference in cost basis for industry is significant and the extension of the gas network should be prioritised under the national planning framework.

Further Rural Renewal Initiatives

- **Devolution of departments to the regions**

Many government departments located in Dublin and other urban regions are occupying very valuable office space. This is at a time when commercial real estate particularly office space is in high demand and low supply. We would submit that where it can be done in a cost effective way, and with long term economic benefits, certain government agencies and departments should be relocated to Urban Centres In Rural Regions (UCRRs).

The premium real estate which becomes vacant in the larger urban regions can be let out or sold, whichever would generate the greater return, and the monies from this can be used to finance any moving costs associated with the relocation. Where necessary relocations will be subsidised.

Just as would be the case if a private company was relocating in order to remain competitive, existing department and agency staff will have the option to relocate with the job. Consensus would be reached that adequate levels of civil service staff are willing to relocate before any moves would be instigated.

This devolution programme will inject much needed life into rural regions and should yield savings for the state at the same time.

- **Establishment of a Regional Development Fund & Establishment of a UNI town fund - Urgent Need of Investment**

A specific regional development fund should be established which would be administered at a local level / regional level. Power to decide the future of rural regions must be returned to rural regions. The fund would be aimed primarily at bottom up job creation. The fund could be administered through local authorities or other existing funding organisations. It should be truly bottom up.

- **A set of Rural Repopulation Incentives**

- Rural Dweller Tax Credit**

- In order to incentivise workers to live in rural regions the introduction of a Rural Dweller Tax Credit could be introduced. Anyone who is normally resident in any part of the designated rural region will be able to avail of a tax credit.

- The tax credit will be applicable to those living in the rural regions regardless of whether or not they work in the rural region. The tax credit will only apply to specific parts of rural regions where huge depopulation has occurred.

Rural Employment Education Initiative

There is little or no career guidance in most second level schools. How career guidance was done in the past was by no means perfect but having none at all is not the solution either. Rural regions suffer greatly with their educated and talented youth leaving en masse for larger urban regions.

One example speaks volumes to this issue; Roscommon has the highest third level graduation rate, yet only 13% of graduates take up their first post-graduation job in the county. This is a common issue across all rural regions. Part of this problem stems from a lack of knowledge among second level student of the kinds of jobs that are available in the places they live and the skills they would require to take up these jobs.

Each local authority will be given a directive from the Department to organise workshops on the types of industry in their locality and the types of jobs young people should train for if they wish to be able return home to work after third level. The workshops will be facilitated in second level schools for leaving and pre-leaving cert pupils.

It is envisaged that by informing young people of the types of job opportunities available in their locality, that greater numbers would train for those jobs and be in a position to return to our rural towns and villages after graduating to take up employment.

Rural Rates Equalisation

A rates equalisation fund should be looked at as an alternative to the existing rates structure. In a similar way to how the LPT is equalised across the country so too could commercial rates be equalised.

All options to reduce the burden of rates on small and medium sized businesses should be explored.

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A CONSULTATION HOSTED BY
MICHAEL FITZMAURICE TD

INTRODUCTION

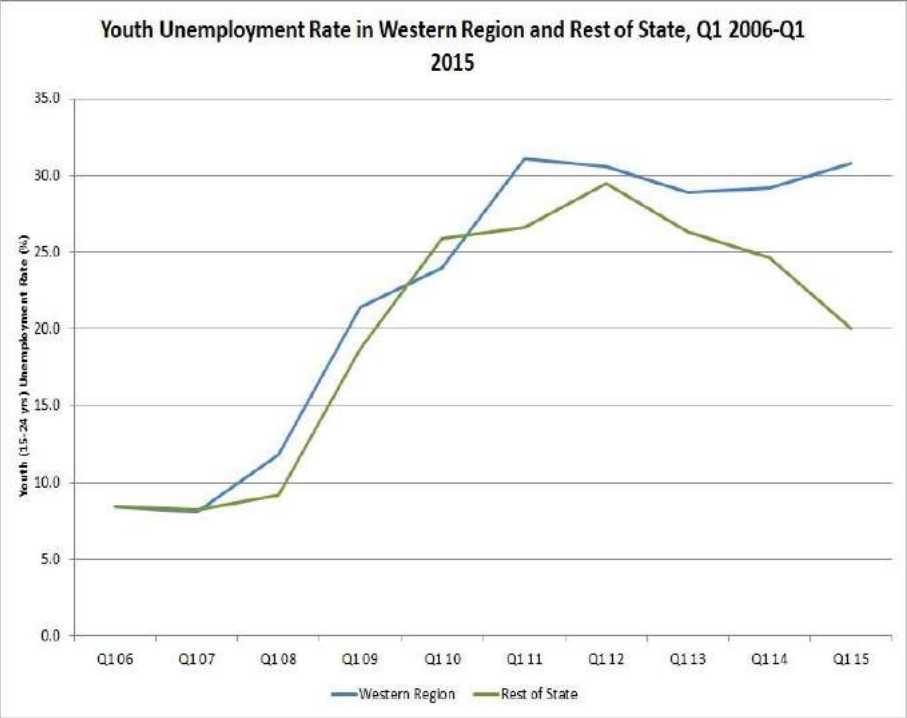
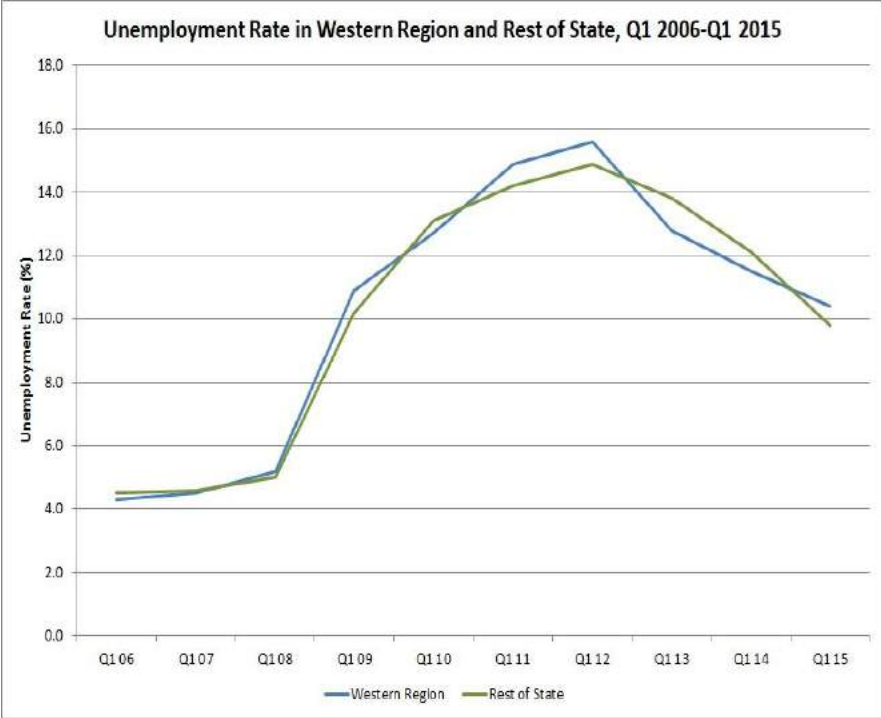
THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF IRELAND FOR 2 DECADES.

IT WILL AFFECT EVERY LAYER OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION- INCLUDING COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLANS.

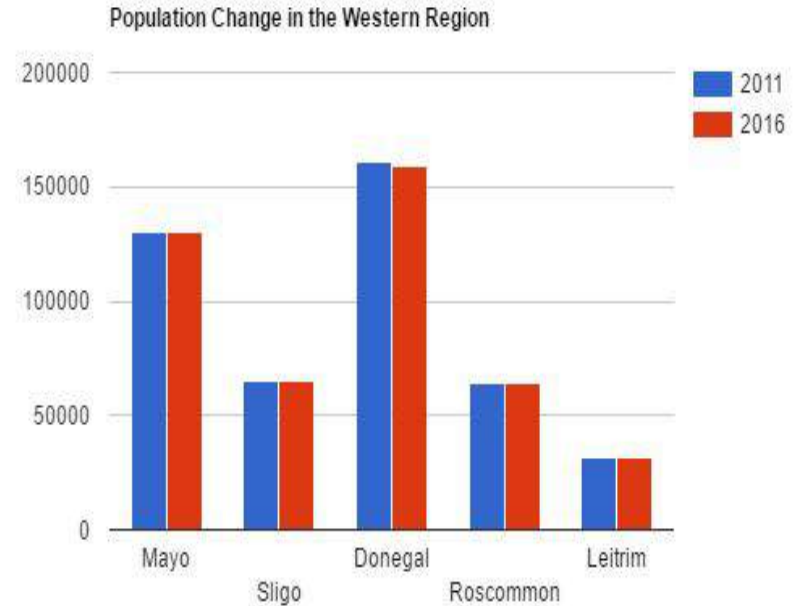
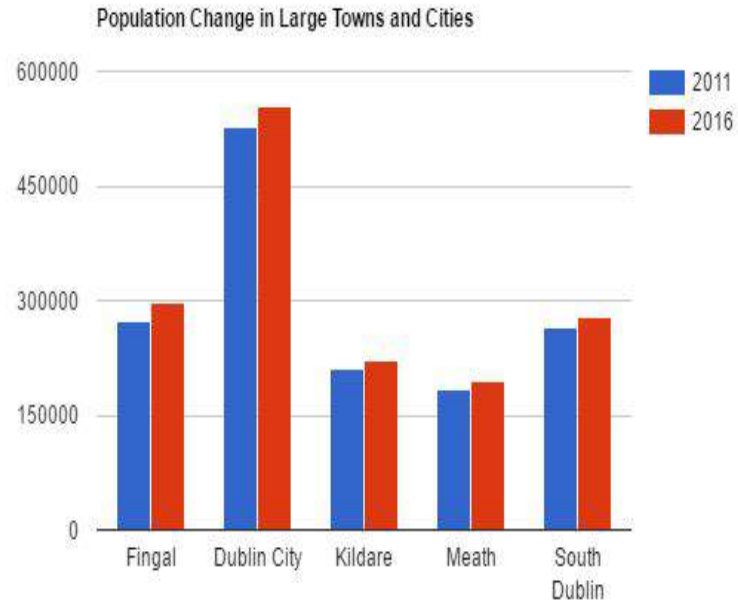
THE OPPORTUNITY NEEDS TO BE SEIZED TO ENSURE RURAL IRELAND GROWS UNDER THIS NEW PROGRAM, UNLIKE IT HAS DONE UNDER THE LAST.

YOU MUST HAVE YOUR IDEAS HEARD.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS



POPULATION TRENDS



OBJECTIVE

REVERSE RURAL DECLINE

DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE

FACILITATE THE CREATION OF JOBS

GROW URBAN HUBS IN RURAL REGIONS

SECURE A FUTURE FOR FAMILY FARMS

BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR RURAL IRELAND

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

- TEN-T FUNDING TO BE USED TO ENSURE THE WEST OF IRELAND CAN BE AS CONNECTED AS OUR NEIGHBOURS IN THE EAST OF THE COUNTRY
- TEN-T FUNDING OF 40% FOR CORE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
- ROAD, RAIL, SEAPORT & AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
- CROSS BORDER CORE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
- WEST OF IRELAND REMOVED FROM TEN-T PROJECT

TEN-T FUNDING TODAY

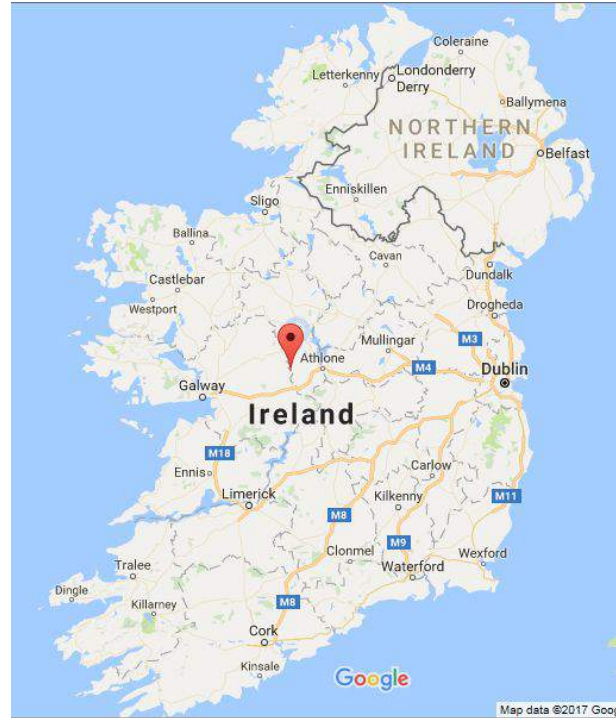
- IN 2011 TEN-T FUNDING FOR THE WEST OF IRELAND WAS REMOVED FROM THE 2007-2013 PROGRAM
- THE FUNDING UNDER THAT PROGRAM FOCUSED LARGELY ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD AND CONNECTING DUBLIN WITH CORK AND LIMERICK
- THE WESTERN ARC MUST BE DEVELOPED UNDER FUTURE PROGRAMS IF THE WEST IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO COMPETE FAIRLY WITH THE EAST

TEN-T MAP TODAY

WEST
OF
IRELAND
REMOVED
FROM TEN-T
PROGRAM



ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE



ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

CONNECTING

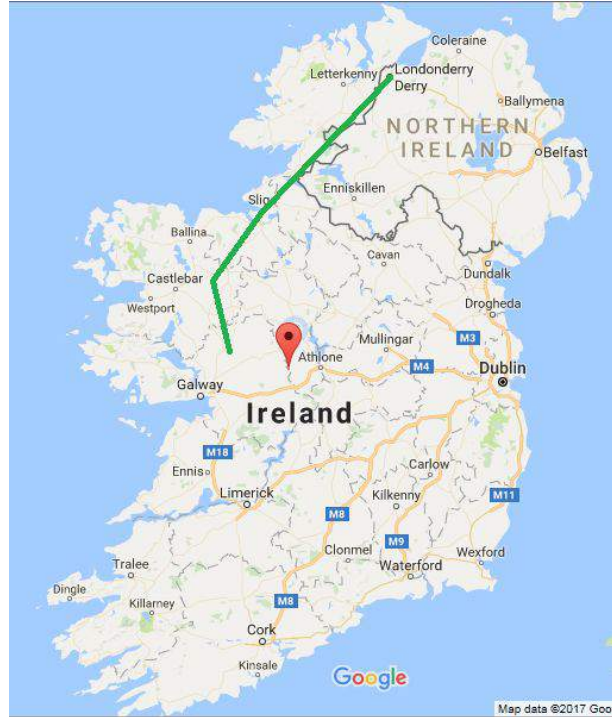
DERRY

SLIGO

KNOCK AIRPORT

TUAM

ATHENRY



ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

CONNECTING

MULLINGAR

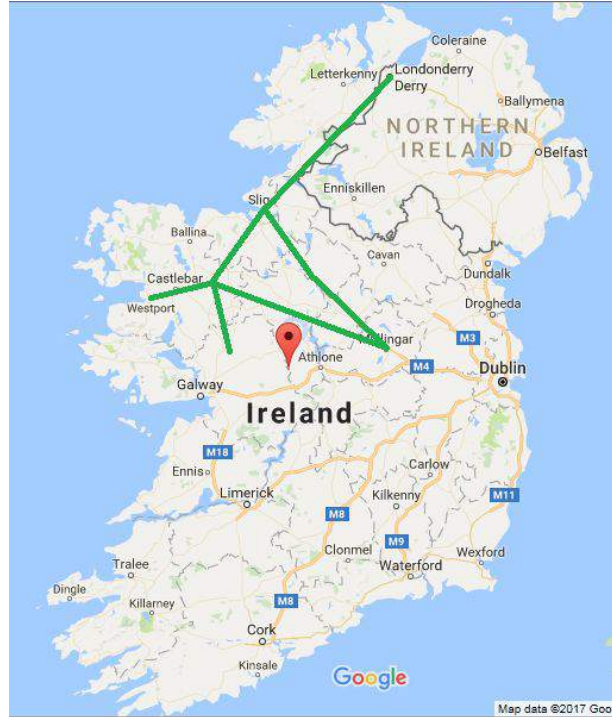
CASTLEBAR

WESTPORT

SLIGO

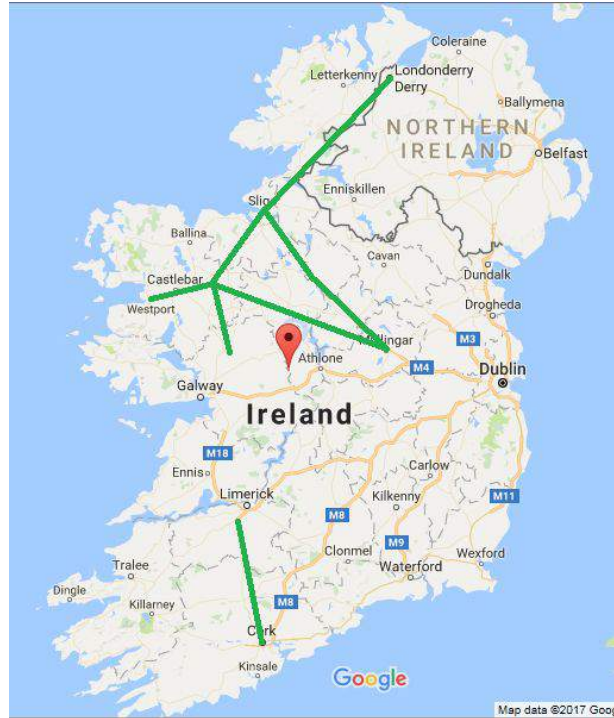
LONGFORD

CARRICK-ON-SHANNON



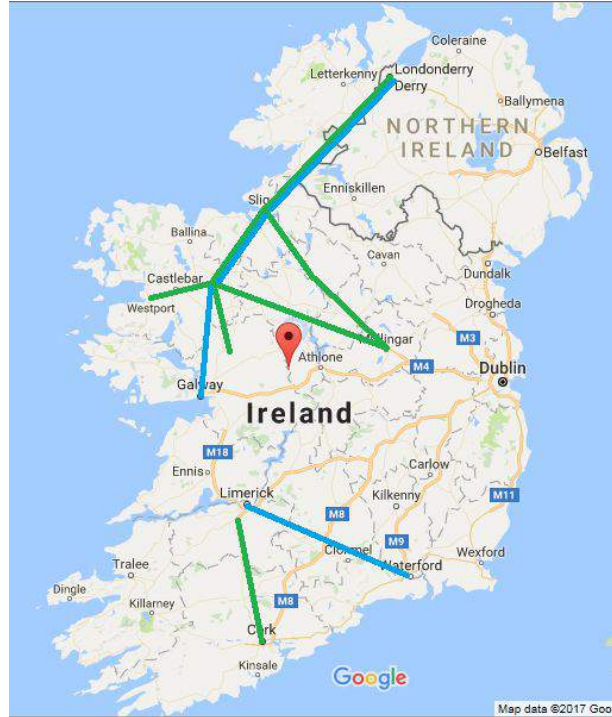
ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

CORK
TO
MALLOW



ROAD & RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

RAILWAY FROM
DERRY TO GALWAY
LIMERICK TO
WATERFORD
FREIGHT



ROAD, PORT & RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

WEST
OF
IRELAND

CONNECTED



GALWAY DEEP
SEA PORT
& RING ROAD

REGIONAL & LOCAL ROADS

- FUNDING REQUIRED
- PRACTICAL PLAN
- PRIORITISE ROADS LINKING SMALLER TOWNS TO LARGER CENTRES

ENTERPRISE & JOBS

- FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT FOR RURAL REGIONS
- URBAN CENTRES IN RURAL REGIONS
- MORE POWER FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES
- TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
- ENCOURAGING DOMESTIC ENTERPRISE
- REFORMING RATES - RATES EQUALIZATION

FDI FOR RURAL REGIONS

- CURRENTLY FDI IS ACTIVELY CHANNELLED INTO URBAN HUBS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THIS METHODOLOGY IS WORKING
- SMALLER SCALE FDI COULD AND SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO LOCATE IN SMALLER URBAN CENTRES
- EX-PAT INVESTORS AND COMPANY EXECUTIVES WHO SEE TOWNS SUCH AS CARRICK-ON-SHANNON AND BALLINASLOE AS GOOD INVESTMENTS MUST BE ENABLED BY AUTHORITIES TO INVEST IN THESE TOWNS

URBAN CENTRES IN RURAL REGIONS

SLIGO

CARRICK-ON-SHANNON

BALLYHAUNIS

ATHLONE/MONKSLAND

BOYLE

BALLAGHADERREEN

CAVAN TOWN

BALLINASLOE

CASTLEREA

CASTLEBAR

ROSCOMMON TOWN

BALLYMOTE

TUAM

WESTPORT

LETTERKENNY

BALLINA

ATHENRY

MULLINGAR

BALLAGHADERREEN

LONGFORD

MONAGHAN TOWN

BUNDORAN

BALLYGAR

LOUGHREA

MORE POWER TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLANS MUST COMPLY WITH THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK
- THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK SHOULD ALLOW FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DEVELOP COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLANS WHICH WOULD ACCOMMODATE AD HOC OPPORTUNITIES WHICH ARISE FOR JOB CREATION AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
- GREATER ROLE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- **WILD ATLANTIC WAY** | DONEGAL - SLIGO - MAYO - GALWAY - CLARE - LIMERICK - KERRY - CORK
- **SHANNON BLUEWAY** | SHANNONSIDE REGION
- **ANCIENT EAST** | CARLOW - CAVAN - CORK - KILDARE - KILKENNY - LAOIS - LIMERICK - LONGFORD - LOUTH - MEATH
- **LAKELANDS REGION** | ROSCOMMON - LONGFORD - WESTMEATH - CAVAN
- **EXPERIENCE REAL IRELAND** | CAVAN - LEITRIM - ROSCOMMON - EAST GALWAY
- **THE IRISH CAMINO** | DUBLIN TO WESTPORT VIA CLOONDRA
- **WETLANDS & PARKLANDS** | LONGFORD - OFFALY - WESTMEATH
- **ANGLING TOURISM HUB** | SHANNONSIDE REGION & LAKELANDS
- **GREENWAYS & CYCLEWAYS** | NORTH, SOUTH, EAST & WEST

ENCOURAGING DOMESTIC ENTERPRISE

- IRELAND IS A NATION OF ENTREPRENEURS, DELIVERING ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING FOR A FUTURE THAT ENCOURAGES RISK TAKERS TO TAKE A CHANCE IS VITAL IF RURAL REGIONS ARE TO RECOVER AND THRIVE
- BROADBAND, ROADS AND PHONE COVERAGE ARE BASIC NEEDS OF ALL BUSINESSES, WITHOUT THESE NEW BUSINESSES CANNOT THRIVE
- DEVELOPING A TAX INCENTIVE SCHEME TO ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESSES TO SUCCEED IN RURAL REGIONS IS ESSENTIAL
- STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FOR SMALLER TOWNS FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT & MAKING TOWNS FUNCTIONAL

RATES EQUALIZATION

IN A SIMILAR WAY THAT LOCAL PROPERTY TAX IS EQUALIZED, ENABLING LARGER COUNTIES TO SUBSIDIZE SMALLER COUNTIES, COMMERCIAL RATES EQUALIZATION COULD BE A SOLUTION TO HIGH RATES WHICH ARE UNSUSTAINABLE IN RURAL REGIONS WHERE THERE IS NEITHER THE FOOTFALL NOR THE TURNOVER TO JUSTIFY THOSE RATES, A FRAMEWORK FOR HOW THIS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN A FAIR AND RATIONAL MANNER MUST BE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

AGRICULTURE

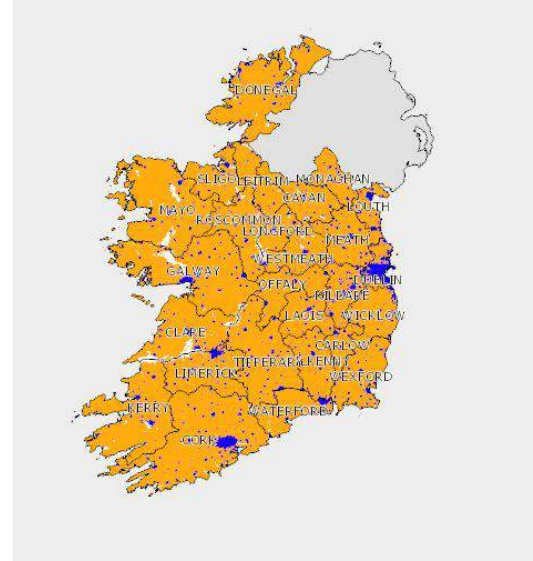
- CAP - 80% GOING TO 20%
- REVIEW CAP 2017
- NEW CAP 2020
- ENCOURAGING NEW YOUNG FARMERS
- SUSTAINING FAMILY FARMS
- MIDDLE-OUT ECONOMIC STIMULUS - FARMERS SPEND
LOCALLY
- ALTERNATIVE FARMING ENTERPRISES

SHANNON BASIN & TRIBUTARIES

- MASSIVE TOURISM POTENTIAL
- MAINTENANCE AND DRAINAGE ESSENTIAL
- SINGLE AUTHORITY TO MANAGE
- LONG TERM PLAN
- ONGOING INVESTMENT
- MODERN FLOODING RELIEF METHODS TO BE EXPLORED

BROADBAND

- HIGH SPEED FIBRE BROADBAND TO EVERY HOME IN IRELAND
- POSITIVE BIAS TO VERY ISOLATED AREAS
- WORK FROM HOME INCENTIVES FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS
- ASSURANCE OF DELIVERY TARGETS
- ALTERNATIVE INTERIM SOLUTIONS



STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH

- LOCATION OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - EXAMPLE OF POOR PLANNING
- LOCATION OF SERVICES FOR SLIGO/DONEGAL/LEITRIM
- ACCESSIBILITY OF EXISTING SERVICES
- RELOCATING SERVICES WITH POOR ACCESSIBILITY
- NATIONAL DEMENTIA STRATEGY & PLAN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- SPORTS FACILITIES
- COMMUNITY CENTRES
- COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE HUBS
- FESTIVAL AND DIASPORA DEVELOPMENT
- DERELICTION FUND
- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- TRAINING FACILITIES IN SMALLER RURAL TOWNS
- RETAIL INCUBATORS
- TOWN TEAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY
- NEW LEADER IN 2020 - BETTER DEAL FOR COMMUNITIES

EDUCATION

- STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FUTURE THIRD LEVEL NEEDS
- ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY
- PROMOTION OF REGIONAL THIRD LEVEL INSTITUTES

COMMUNICATIONS, ENERGY & BANKING

- POST OFFICE NETWORK
- ALTERNATIVE ENERGY STRATEGY
- COMMUNITY BANKING

THANK YOU